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ABSTRACT

Most agree, in general, that educational research benefits American schools. However, the specific relationship between research and application remain poorly cultivated, and too little educational research is actually utilized by classroom teachers. This paper selectively reviews the intricate association between educational researchers and American practitioners and focuses on models of professional collaboration. Educational research will be more generously applied if researchers, research institutions, teachers, and schools would realistically accommodate one another. A four-page list of references is included. (Author)

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TEACHER/RESEARCHER COLLABORATION IN AN AGE OF ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Teacher/Researcher Collaboration in an Age of Organizational Development [1,2,3].

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> Psychology as a science and a profession had had its most important impact on schools through . . . research . . . . Futhermore, our understanding of the processes by which research knowledge enters educational practice remains rudimentary. (Takanishi, De Leon, & Pallak, 1983, p. 997)
>
> The major problem with research on teaching is that it has ignored the teaching preferences of teachers. (Zahorik, 1984, p. 35)

How do you improve schools? What is the lifeblood of educational reform? One answer, from E. L. Thorndike's connectionism and John Dewey's "linking science" (see Glaser, 1982) to the present, is educational research.

For some educators, faith in research is resolute. Yet, in reality, the perceived value of educational research to American educational practice for too many educators ebbs and wanes like the tide. Value depends upon whom and when you ask. Given a fresh charismatic figure or a new national panic about schools, educational psychology rolls forth once again to exert itself.

Early this century, progress in educational research was unmistakenly the doing of one pre-eminent personality,

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Professor Edward Lee Thorndike at Columbia's Teacher's College (see Roweton, 1980). What Thorndike studied and how he did it methodologically remains an evident scientific model for educational practitioners and psychologists. Simply, educational psychologists borrow from the psychology of learning what educational practice needs. Sound educational research adheres to the same design rigors as experimental psychology, and educational psychologists are very exacting about research generalizability. Thorndike wrestled with contemporary critics like William James (1899) who questioned the workability of the whole scheme. Although the Thorndike orientation is questioned even today, it persists.

Another noteworthy emergence of educational research this century was sparked by the national educational panic following Russia's launching of Sputnik in 1957. By 1958, public anxiety energized political action. Dollars were marshalled, vis-a-vis the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958, to address an embarrassing disparity between American and Soviet technical accomplishments. Many thought then, as some still do, that blame belonged largely with the public schools.

"Fix the schools" was as much a rallying cry in the early 1960's as it appears to be in the mid-1980's. Consequently, now may be another opportunity for educational researchers to assert themselves.

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Fixing schools, through action-applied research or charismatic persuasion, is an engaging national past-time that periodically catches our fancy. Whatever the problem, someone articulates a solution. Of course, decades of this research/schooling enterprise have generated libraries of literature. However, educational practitioners want fervently to distinguish useful educational research from irrelevant and senseless journalese.

Fred Hechinger (1983), the New York Times Education Editor, finds much of what happened in the 1960's among "compassionate school reformers" like Goodman, Holt, and Kozol, childish, impulsive, excessive, and ineffective. Hechinger prefers a carefully mapped road to progress:

> . . . the answer should not be sought in dramatic innovation but in intelligent "piecemeal" changes brought about with the advice and consent of teachers --teachers who are themselves well-educated and who are not treated as mere hired hands by their superiors . . . . (p. 9

Hechinger found too much educational research silly with its sensationalistic innovations. Lasting reform is a plodding process of empirical construction, and, to insure applicability and usefulness, teachers must be involved.

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Self-serving statements from the educational research community are pointedly reminescent of how researchers perceive their tasks. Frank Farley (1982) writes:

> What we need in education is more of that solid cumulative accomplishment. There is soft-headed, mushy, ill-conceived and junk research in many areas of education, but we must fight this. (p. 16)

Educational research should not only be methodologically justifiable but also educationally applicable. Marrying rigor and usefulness, however, has been a pesky perennial problem. A successful marriage will require, at the very least, a social as well as a disciplinary reconciliation of researchers with teachers. This, however, has not been simple. To paraphrase Sigmund Koch, madhouses have been populated by far lesser concerns.

Educational researchers and school practitioners operate in different worlds. The difference is due to more than that one group is comfortable with numbers and abstractions and the other with daily practicalities. Each speaks their own professional dialect and relies on different professional experiences. Evertson (1979) summarizes this predicament aptly:

> . . . one of the most evident reasons for failure to translate or to communicate was the lack of

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> shared language . . . and an understanding of classrooom events. (p. 57)

Researchers may view teachers as soft-headed, and, in turn, teachers become passive, hostile, and professionally isolated (see Tikunoff, Ward, & Lazar, 1979). The view of researches by some teachers is no less dignified.

Classroom teachers and educational researchers have lived professionally in different worlds for years and have grown apart. "Consequently," Robert Grinder (1985) reminds us, " . . . there is no linkage whatsoever between the science of research and the art of teaching" (p. 12).

> Does anyone know of classroom teachers who formulate hypotheses, design experiments, gather and analyze data, and report results? Teachers are paid to keep students in their classes learning subject matter, just as they were in the beginning, but now, motivational strategies, teaching methods, and disciplinary techniques are provided by gurus external to the profession. (Grinder, 1985, p. 12)

Quite early this century, Charles Judd (1915), another of Thorndike's critics, envisioned the emerging problem in his book, Psychology of High-School Subjects.

> . . . many a teacher is alienated, and refuses to become a party to the scientific study of education

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> because he does not sympathesize with the expert's demand for rigid, scientific exactness. (Judd, 1915, p. 12)

Collaboration

Thorndike assumed that school practitioners are forever in search of applicable educational research. Once found and however produced, it is molded to fit and then applied. Much of our empirical literature is not applied, and this may have little to do with the qualities of our research. It may have more to do with the fact that research speaks an awkward language for teachers or that researchable questions are not valued by practitioners.

Some have reasoned that if teachers are actively involved in data collection, product development, dissemination, and implementation (r, d, d, & i), educators will utilize research more frequently. Support exists for joint teacher/researcher interaction from Chien, Cook, and Harding (1948), Corey (1949, 1952, 1953), Herrick (1948), Wann (1952), and Wrightstone (1949) to Tikunoff and Ward (1983) and Gottfredson (1984).

The educational researcher/practitioner enterprise has been predominately linear, not interactive. Each step in linear research is assigned to different actors. One group of university researchers designs, studies, and collects data; a second group, perhaps some commercial investor or educational laboratory, creates applicable and testable

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products; the teachers, the third group, apply the products, etc. The Ernest Hilgard (1972) approach, so evident following Sputnik, operates linearly.

The Hilgard model--a step-wise progression from data producers to public school practitioners--enjoyed years of prosperity largely through massive NDEA funding. Its most articulate and respected spokesperson, Ernest Hilgard, schematically envisioned a six-part taxonomy of activity from laboratory research to curricular dissemination. According to Hilgard and his associates, school research and products would be constructed and supported empirically and honed by careful field testing. All seemed logical.

Hilgard's strategy functioned best when teachers were personally willing to cooperate. Of what use are grandiose educational solutions for puzzles that no one values? So often, in the linear model, the arena for problem formulation was quite distant from school practitioners. Teachers were rarely consulted. Instead, they were mailed solutions and products. In the real cycle, few seemed to know whether the stuff was ever used.

It is not true that the massive 1960's Federal R & D effort, where dozens of centers and laboratories were constructed, yielded no benefits. On many counts, those were productive years, and schools still use many of these curriculum products and models. However, the linear R & D approach did not integrate researchers with users, and the

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chasm between the research community and America's teachers widened.

What replaced the linear strategy was revitalized collaboration[2] between teachers and educational researchers. Tikunoff and Ward (1983) felt like so many others (see, e.g., Wilson et al. 1982) that separating producers from utilizers bodes evil. The focus of educational research has decidedly shifted from R & D Centers to local schools (e.g., Goodlad, 1984) and has set the stage for cooperation, if not collaboration.

According to Tikunoff et al. (1979), interactive research has six characteristics:

(1) The research, development, dissemination, and implementation (r, d, d, i) cycle actively involves both research utilizers and designers simultaneously;

(2) Research effort focuses only on consumer-valued problems;

(3) There is a parity of responsibility and decision-making in interactive teams (one researcher, a trainer-developer, and several teachers);

(4) There is a continuous interaction between research and development;

(5) It stimulates professional growth for all; and

(6) It maintains the integrity and complexity of classroom life.

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Tikunoff et al. (1979) reports two separate demonstrations of r, d, d, and i interaction. Each demonstration lasted 15.5 months between August, 1977, and November, 1978. One collaborative team operated in a large, urban school system in San Diego. All San Diego team members, including the researcher and trainer/developer, were employees of the public school system. The second team was from a rural school district located twenty miles from Burlington and the University of Vermont. This Vermont team consisted of school and university personnel.

The teams labored interactively from problem formulation right through research design, product development, and ultilization. Separate evaluation teams of teachers, researchers, and other professionals judged both the California and Vermont projects. Generally, evaluations were more favorable for California than for Vermont. Nonetheless, the research designs and outcomes were satisfactory, and cost-effective on both accounts.

William Tikunoff's effort through the Far West Laboratory is a detailed illustration of productive teacher/researcher collaboration. Together, the Tikunoff teams orchestrated a comprehensive assemblage of skills. And, with enough encouragement and financial support, Tikunoff et al. (1979, 1980, 1983) found that classrooom teachers and researchers can together execute effective investigations valued by all the participants.

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Beyond Tikunoff

Effective collaborative educational research requires more than cooperation and enthusiasm. We smile at one another, collect sound data, write understandable reports, and build empirically-justifiable programs. However, to have impact, professional researchers must also understand and appreciate educators. Zahorik (1984) summarizes our sentiments exactly:

> Teachers in general do not wait on their knees for researchers to make pronouncements. They must act whether or not research prescriptions . . . are available . . . . Teachers are valuing rather than vacuous persons . . . . (P. 35)

Tikunoff and Ward (1983) offered only one act of an involved and institutional drama. Other organizational problem solving models emphasize interaction, collaboration, and participation. Gottfredson's (1984) product development evaluation (PDE) model builds beyond action-research, a tradition with established roots in American education and John Dewey.

PDE facilitates ". . . practical theory, useful research, and organizational change and development" (Gottfredson, 1984, p. 1101) by having ". . . researchers and implementors collaborate in evaluation, design, question formulation, and planning" (p. 1109).

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Each organizational change model purports distinctive orientations. Gottfredson's PDE emphasizes explicitness--explicit theory; explicit plans for product adoption; data-based intervention; planned evaluation; participant communication; etc.

Gottfredson (1984) recognizes that any research or policy manipulation permeates an organization, and it is this long-term, inclusive, developmental perspective that should guide data-based research, planning, and change. Schools introducing a new curriculum seldom proceed so deliberatively. Ill-planned changes, Gottfredson suggests, seldom enjoy their full and intended effects.

Organizational development problem solving models do have a history, but successes have not been unqualified. Assembling a team of professionals to work collaboratively is still more of an art than a science. Start with Chein, Cook, and Harding's (1948) promotion of action research nearly four decades ago:

> In this discussion we have not attempted to gloss over the difficulties of action research. We have certainly not presented a social panacea. (p. 50)

Gottfredson (1984) writes:

> Program development evaluation does not successfully resolve many of the sources of tension in merging

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action with research but it is progress. (P. 1111)

What is missing?

Organizational Health

What may be missing is a generous, practical application of what is already known about operating healthy educational organizations. Simply put, some schools are just not growing, productive organizations. The descriptive and empirical literature on healthy organizations is considerable.

Gallessich (1982, pp. 322-323) reduced the extensive literature to twelve attributes:

1. Healthy institutions are thoroughly and explicitly committed to its organizational goals.
2. Problem solving is open and productive.
3. Decisions are data based and are made by those who are affected and by those who implement them.
4. Communication is open.
5. Healthy organizations consistantly reward individuals who support stated organizational goals.
6. All subsystems of healthy organizations support stated organizational goals.
7. Individuals are respected resources;

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personal growth is promoted; flexibility and creativity are encouraged.

8. Conflict is open and constructively managed.

9. A healthy organization continually monitors its own performance.

10. Staff members adapt to changing conditions.

11. Resources are optimally utilized.

12. Administrators realistically assess their organization's assets and liabilities.

Conoley and Conoley (1982, pp. 124-125) generated a corresponding list of traits for healthily functioning organizations. They emphasized subsystem integration; the permeability of organizational boundaries; role clarity; goal agreement; problem solving capability; resource utilization; morale; and the ability to balance change and stability. Scapegoating typifies distressed organizations. However viewed, healthy educational organizations are pleasant and productive.

Generating educational research locally requires more than allowing a few teachers to identify valued problems and far more than vigorous research designs. For one, the success of seeing the r, d, d, and i cycle to completion demands substantial teacher and organizational energy, time, and commitment plus a researcher with teacher-rapport.

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Successful collaboration depends upon, among other variables, the qualities of human interactions in an educational institution. Earlier analysis of teacher researcher teams have been neither particularly sensitive nor sophisticated about organizational dynamics.

Next, any collaborative team's effort is dependent upon time, place, and circumstance. Given traditional library arrangements, classroom teachers find it extremely awkward to retrieve appropriate research literature let alone read it. Sykes (1983) writes:

> The act of teaching may just not be hospitable to an analytic approach, and so teachers regard the fruits of social science with skepticism. If the conditions of work--particularly the absence of time for reflection --and the phenomenology of teaching are fundamentally imcompatible with the formal use of social science knowledge, then perhaps we should direct researchers to rethink their work vis-a-vis teaching, rather than chide teachers for failing to use research results. (p. 81; also see Singleton, Edmunds, Rapson, and Steele, 1982).

The realities of public school teaching mitigate against extended, quality collaboration.

Individual teachers are frequently the target of educational researcher ridicule. Why aren't teachers more

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professional? Of course, individuals are responsible for their behavior, but educational organizations which host their efforts are also responsible.

Teachers and their organizations harbor expectations about educational researchers, and all these are not pleasant. Therefore, effective problem solving, we suspect, follows productive attitudes.

Teachers and school systems also covet beliefs about research itself. What they expect varies. True, teachers believe that educational research should be useful, but there is no reason to believe that the definition for usefulness is widely shared. ". . . public school practitioners . . . are systematically concerned with a different dimension of a research study . . . its usefulness" (Kennedy, 1979, p. 59). Listen very carefully, and you may find that teachers hum a common tune but sing, in fact, a variety of lyrics.

Effective researcher teams need to look beyond skills and information and problem solving strategies to understand when and how teachers utilize educational research information. Teams need to also look at job characteristics, attitudes, personalities, group dynamics, and strategies for making research involvement palatable.

Proper Perspectives

Its central idea is that the people who are to take

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> action must also be involved in the research process from the very beginning. Not only will they more keenly realize the need for the particular action program finally decided upon, but their "ego investments" . . . are brought . . . . (Chien, Cook, & Harding, 1948, p. 46)

It has taken some effort, but teachers and researchers have learned to hate one another. This has short-changed empiricism and has given new life to educational authoritarianism. Here, well-phrased pronouncements are more decisive than artfully collected data and analyses. The non-empirical educational mafia is as powerful today as it was when Laura Zirbes (1952) observed that bunch three decades ago:

> Cooperative research needs to be projected . . . in times like ours when irresponsible criticism uses the strategies of totalitarianism in a cold war on educational advance. (P. 488)

No one denies that educational research influences educational practices. In fact, it does, and we are swamped by illustrations from testing and measurement to Jean Piaget. Yet, the relationship between producers and utilizers remains, at best, strained. Moellenberg (1984) writes:

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> . . . the technological infrastructure supporting professional practice is not . . . effectively packaged to deliver powerful solutions to specific problems. (P. 21)

Educational practitioners ignore much research, and its value is underutilized. Haphazard sampling will remain the unfortunate standard until needs and styles of researchers, teachers, and school organizations are compassionately coordinated.

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Footnotes

[1]Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the annual meetings of the Rocky Mountain Education Research Association (Oklahoma City, OK, October 24, 1984) and the Northern Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association (Jackson, Wyoming, October 10, 1985).

[2]Tikunoff et al. (1980) prefers the term, interactive. For Tikunoff and his associates and their interactive research and development on teaching (IR & DT) model, interaction is between educational researchers and teachers.

[3]We fully appreciate the insightful editorial comments of Professor George Griffith.

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